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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is the third in a series of ten stemming from the view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. Specifically, the pamphlet presents ideas drawn from a five-year expressive language project developed in an inner city school. The various sections deal with the following topics: the dimensions of expressive language, its basis in the work of James Britton, urgencies in contemporary education, expressive language in the elementary classroom, the teacher as human, the representation of experience, the overt persuaders, student growth, the need to accept the expressive, the need for schools to emphasize language learning, and the difficulties in accepting the expressive. The pamphlet also contains a list of educators who participated in the project. Many excerpts from student writings and from transcripts of classroom discussions are included. (FL)

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Language in the Classroom: A Series. 3

SOME DIMENSIONS OF EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

P. E. Goodhall

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2. Small Group Talk and Reading Comprehension
3. Some Dimensions of Expressive Language
4. Talking, Writing and Learning
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FOREWORD

This pamphlet is one of a series, produced as discussion papers by a group of teachers who participated in a graduate course in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Calgary. In development, the papers reflect the method of the boys of Barbiana: each paper has been shaped and tempered, through several stages by the input of the group. In intent, the series reflects the aims of the pamphlets originated by the Writing Across the Curriculum Project Team of the Institute of Education at the University of London, to whom we are indebted for pointing the way.

The series stems from a view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. Further, the series represents a conviction that teachers are in the best position to understand the heuristic role of language in the classroom as well as to assess the needs of children in the schools and that they are the most likely to find solutions for problems in classroom practice. To realize this potential and to extend their influence, teachers need to offer their ideas and experiences freely and be willing to consider the ideas of their colleagues openly. It is in this spirit of sharing that these pamphlets are published.

We are grateful to Al Kahanoff, Principal of Branton Junior High School in Calgary for his generous editorial assistance and for his help in seeing the pamphlets through publication.

We also wish to thank Miss Lorraine Cockle for the cover design.

James Britton
Merron Chorny

SOME DIMENSIONS OF EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Without hedging our bets, we want to say that an understanding of the function of expressive language in human life is crucial to the successful functioning of any school. But we want to be more specific even than that. We would want to say that it is central to any efforts to redeem inner city schools.

The understanding of language growth from the expressive to more specialized forms of utterance is a particularly powerful idea in schools where children don't see much point in what the school has to offer. By accepting their closest-to-hand language, you change their attitude towards school and what the school wants them to do. You give them a sense of their own significance. By making their own resources available to them, you help them to do better what they can already do. Children might come to school illiterate and often do, but they rarely come to the school ignorant. Accepting expressive language admits of a developmental approach to learning in general and to language learning in particular.

THE BASIS IN BRITTON

"Expressive" is one of the three language categories outlined by James Britton in his article, "What's The Use", a schematic account of language functions, and developed in his book Language and Learning. Of this category, Britton says:

> Expressive speech is language close to the speaker; what engages his attention is freely verbalized, and as he presents his view of things, his loaded commentary upon the world, so he also presents himself. Thus, it is above all in expressive speech that we get to know one another, each offering his unique speech identity and (at our best) offering and accepting what is common and what differentiates us. Secondly, it is in expressive speech that we are likely to rehearse the growing points of our formulation and analysis of experience. [1]

Expressive language, both spoken and written, is easy-going language. It is language between friends, ambiguous, colloquial, context-bound, intimate, inventive, rambling and redundant. It is talk embedded in situation, full of predicates, often lacking in subjects. It is the ordinary language of everyday affairs. Britton's co-workers expand on the expressive in this way:

> It is language in which it is taken for granted that the writer or speaker himself is of interest to his audience; he feels free to jump from facts to speculations to personal anecdote to emotional outburst, and none of it will be taken down and used against him - it is all part of being a person vis a vis another person. It is the means by which the old is shaped and the new is tentatively explored. Thoughts may be half uttered, attitudes half expressed, the rest being left to be picked up by a listener or reader who is willing to take the unexpressed on trust. [2]

Expressive language is the matrix out of which grow Britton's two other language categories: the transactional and the poetic. Transactional language is what Britton calls language in the participant role. Its function is to get the work of the world done. It is language used to inform, to persuade, to teach and to learn. Subcategories of the informative function are recording, reporting, generalizing and theorizing. This kind of language is usually very explicit and in varying degrees excludes the voice of the writer from the writing.

At the other end of the language function continuum is what Britton refers to as spectator role language. It is made manifest in poetic utterance; it is language in which experience is shaped, verbal objects are made, where what is said is to be experienced and savoured rather than used. It is the language in which we build a world view, our personal myth, the story we tell ourselves, or anyone else who might be interested in our views, of our opinions and our life.

URGENCIES IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Popular criticism of the education system is to the effect that although young people spend more time in school than they used to, they are less capable in language competencies than they were. The criticism that the schools turn out young people who are virtually illiterate is made against a background of intensive skills teaching in the schools, but no one seems willing to admit this. New insights

into the place of language in human life offer us a hopeful alternative to more and more intensive skills teaching. In his epoch-making essay, written in 1933, Sapir makes it quite clear that the primary function of language is not communication, but representation of experience. [3] He goes on to extend the functions of language to those of synpraxis (sustaining your efforts in a task by talking to yourself as you work), ordering, thinking and cultural preservation, in such activities as praying, telling stories, encoding and observing rules, to the establishment of rapport through small talk.

Before they come to school, children use language to achieve things, they use it at the unselfconscious and inventive level, and the language they use is embodied in what they are doing and what they want to achieve. School often breaks down this sense of purpose and embeddedness of language in on-going concerns. Language in school often becomes something that children must learn about, and so very often it loses its most valuable function - it is no longer useful to a child as he goes on, making sense of his experiences, making representations of what occurs and what happens to him in talk and later in writing.

A child's reading and writing often becomes a remote code he must learn which relates very tenuously, if at all, to what he intuitively knows about language and life. And this is even more obvious in inner city schools, where the middle-class stance of the educational establishment makes the child's work even more remote from what he knows about the world. This is the root cause of much failure in our inner city schools.

Constant failure soon convinces children that it is better not to try at all.[4] (Holt, 1974, p. 24) And so children do as little as possible; and it is the child who gets "turned off", who loses the effect of his formal education. This is not to say that correctness in language use is not a real issue in education, of course it is. Rather, it is to understand that language learning and use is a developmental process that teachers should know a great deal about.

In relation to the above, it is interesting to note what has been said in a different but related context about language and language development. With reference to grammar, which is always a matter for concern amongst teachers and parents, Slobin writes:

> Developmental psychologists in the United States have collected much evidence (to suggest that children behave "as if they knew the rules" of the language), clearly indicating that at least English-speaking children (both white and black, middle-class and lower-class) develop, discard, and refine grammatical rule systems, ultimately arriving at adult linguistic competence.[5]

With respect to usage, Martin Joos writes, "I know of only one way out, and it is almost a council of perfection." He continues:

> Teachers must simply abandon the theory that usage differs in quality as between good and bad, correct and incorrect, and instead build their methods and reconstruct their emotional reactions on the plain facts that are already known in part to their pupils. Teacher and pupil must come to terms with each other - and of course, all the burden of coming to terms must rest upon the one who is supposed to be wiser and better informed - on the basis that usages can be learned without condemning those which they replace, that the learner has an indefeasible right to speak as he likes without school penalties, while the teacher

> has no rights in this respect, only the duty to demonstrate what usages are profitable in the adult world. [6]

That's pretty strong stuff, probably too strong for many, but is demands careful consideration if we are to make schools into profitable places for all children to come to, as come they must. Teachers must become much more informed with respect to the different styles of language which are in daily use, the purposes for which they are used and the diverse audiences which are to be addressed in appropriate ways.

Teachers must resist society's demands that they become its plenipotentiaries, the sole guardians of all that is right and proper in language matters, and take on a broader responsibility. They must help children to use their language confidently in a variety of situations, so that children do not become embarrassed, diffident or defeated when they need to address themselves to broader issues and different audiences.

It is not legitimate to think of expressive language as substandard utterance, unfit for education. The language of the home and street and playground is not identical with expressive language, but if children are to make new learning their own, then they must be free to use their own words, and for most children, this means using what appears to many educators to be a substandard, unacceptable form of utterance. This very often is the only language a child has. It is the only language that a child can use confidently for his early learning. Criticize it, deny it, reject it, correct it,

and you are likely to reject a child, his world view, and his early efforts. Show a child to be a failure, and what he learns about himself as a learner early in his school life will probably determine what his attitudes will be towards new learning, his teachers and formal propositional knowledge in general as he goes through school. By accepting expressive language in schools, degrees of understanding and reciprocity are generated which lead to better and more confident academic performances. Children show themselves to their teachers. They show their humour, their effort, their sincerity, their competence and their thinking; and teachers, because they are willing to take the unexpressed on trust, and bring to the children's writing a more generous interpretation of meaning than is usual, generate enhanced degrees of confidence and delight in their learners.

Against this background, language teaching in schools must be considered to be a developmental process, where the teacher's ultimate concern is for the appropriate language and form of the adult world. Expressive language is "the source within the learner" from which all other means of representation grow. Expressive language has life-long usefulness and should always be part of anyone's linguistic repertoire; it is not to be shunned as a substandard mode which will hopefully wither away as students become more capable and sophisticated.

Probably the most significant function of expressive language is that it generates situations of confidence and reciprocity between people.

It is the language in which students can be encouraged to "go on, say more." It is the language in which we can all take risks, putting forward new formulations of experience for consideration and social sanction. The rewards to be reaped from expressive language when children tell stories, relate incidents, try to explain, do their best, are a fuller understanding of what and who they are, and that what they offer matters to us and to them.

THE EXPRESSIVE IN ACTION

The beginnings of this confidence and reciprocity in the elementary school might appear at first sight to be trivial and even slipshod:

> We went to Fairview Hutterite Colony. As soon as we got there I was excited. I got out of the bus. Then the man said no pictures. OH, I did get mad. I liked the girl that took us around ..." (Jackie, Grade 5)

or again:

> We ate lunch on a terminal moraine. And the very loose rock as you walked down the valley more. The mountains has signs of erosion. The mountains had deep cuts in them. I was mad we hardly had any time to eat lunch. And we didn't even get to go up the glacier, boy, I was so angry I felt terrible. But we had fun ..." (Jackie, Grade 5)

Whatever else might be said about these two entries in a girl's personal journal of her school visits, it is clear that she does not fear censure from her teachers for her disapproval of certain aspects of the trips. This confidence, to say clearly what she felt, we would like to suggest, is a direct result of the conscious and informed acceptance in her classroom of expressive language.

On reporting a visit to the Canadian Pacific Railroad Repair shops, Jackie began this way:

> "Well at first we went into a building and everyone had to wear a hard hat."

The phrase "Well at first ..." is one of sympathetic circularity. Jackie seems to embrace her audience with an intimate air of confidence and trust.

In this sense it reflects an observation made by Parker:

> We can draw upon Sartre's concept of human existence as consisting of Being-for-Itself, Being-for-Others and Being-in the-World to emphasize the objectiveness that others can give us by viewing and responding to us.
> (Parker, Unpublished Paper, Harvard Symposium, 1973) [7]

Only by her teacher accepting Jackie's view of her situation, her including him quite unselfconsciously in her audience, does she grow in confidence, integrity and judgement.

Britton sees expressive speech as important for three reasons:

a) It is the principal means by which we approach and meet each other in all our separateness, each declaring his unique identity and (at our best), offering both what is common and what differentiates us.

b) It is the first tentative formulation in words of most plans of action, most new ways of construing our experience of the world, and,

c) It is the principal means by which we influence one another as the functions in (a) and (b) converge. [8]

THE TEACHER AS HUMAN

It is the first function mentioned by Britton, the declaring of one's identity that seems to be of major importance in changing the character of many schools. By generating what Britton calls "a web of social concern", teachers come out from the shadows and show themselves to be people, beings with hopes and fears, likes and dislikes, enthusiasms and aversions and so, consequently, other people, and more particularly students, can more easily understand them. Identities are declared and trust between people is established. It seems that a "reality of encounter" can begin in schools when teachers and children, but mainly teachers, show themselves by the language register that they use, to be approachable and not always standing on their academic dignity, using highly wrought, turgid language to impress, to demean, to mystify and to hide behind. Teachers can use their language to fend off their students or they can use expressive language to come face-to-face with their students as one human being to another.

THE REPRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE

Three examples of children's work might illustrate Britton's second point: expressive language is the "way in" to new knowledge. It is the language we use to articulate new ways of construing experience and to make clear to ourselves what other people have been telling us.

Here is what Gordon, a grade five student, wrote after seeing a pig's heart opened up in a science lesson:

> This afternoon my teacher brought two pigs hearts to class. It stunk alot but I stode and wathed. It was cut up allrady. there was lots of stirgs in it. The strings were used for closing and shuting fefs. Some people thot it was good and I'm one of them. there was the's thing galed a tri-cuspid valve it loot like a can of shaveing cream. They have a noderdag on tv and this man is shoping and there is this shelf and these can start to sing. after reces we lookt at a chicken heart a in side of it is this tark blood that makes you have heart a tacke. We felt the tark blood and it got stuk on my finger the dark blood gets stuk in your felsell. dug fuller is goig to take some home he said if it was going to stink he would put it out side. (Gordon, Grade 5)
>
> In standard language and orthography, this is what Gordon said:
>
> This afternoon my teacher brought two pigs' hearts to class. It stunk a lot but I stood and watched. It was cut up already. There were lots of strings in it. The strings were used for closing and shutting valves. Some people thought it was good and I am one of them. There was this thing called a tri-cuspid valve; it looked like a can of shaving cream. They have a commercial on T.V. and this man is shopping and there is this shelf and these can start to sing. After recess we looked at a chicken heart and inside of it is this dark blood that makes you have heart attacks. We felt the dark blood and it got stuck on my finger; the dark blood gets stuck in your vessels. Doug Fowler is going to take some home. He said that if it was going to stink he would put it outside.

Looking past the poor spelling and errors in construction and grammar, Gordon shows himself to be fascinated by what he saw. The rhythmic action of the tri-cuspid valve had been stimulated by poking and pulling with tweezers. Gordon made an excellent association between the action of the tri-cuspid valve, and the rhythmic pulsing of the singing mouth of a can of shaving cream in a television commerical. Gordon was making as much sense as he could of a new experience in

terms of his past experience and doing it very well indeed. He tells himself, it seems, that dark blood sticks to your vessels like it stuck to his finger, "and this is the cause of heart attacks."

Gordon is writing essentially in the expressive mode, principally because it is the only mode in which he can operate (after five years of very formal schooling) including spelling lessons, vocabulary lessons, phonics lessons, standard usage lessons and reading analysis skills. He is bringing the language that he has, the language that is closest and most familiar to him, to deal with a new experience for which he has not yet the language or the process. He is coming to grips with the new experience, even though he reveals what might be termed many shortcomings in the formalities of writing. But he has committed himself honestly and insightfully; the flow of language has begun. In time, with his own commitment and the help of his teachers, he will come to terms with the formalities of careful explication as well. New experience will be taken on at this level and new and more appropriate language will emerge. And clearly, expressive language will be the catalyst in this development.

After the same demonstration, Barbara, another grade five student, wrote this:

> This afternoon My Teacher brought two pigs hearts to class, and it look just like our hearts because it had a pumping station and the strongest side of the heart when I touched it, it felt funny and I thought that it couldn't be like our heart, but it was like our heart. And also there were these clots of blood that could

cause a heart attack. When I felt it I said that's what a human's heart feels like. When I looked at it again My Teacher showed use the veins and the heart strings. My Teacher said that it was to bad that they cut it up like that because he couldn't show us all of the things thats in the heart. But when he showed the inside of the chickens heart it look the same as the big heart. Even though it was awful I still like seeing scarey things. But after awhile when My Teacher showed Dianne's heart she picked up the gizzard I didn't like the smell. (Barbara H., Grade 5)

This account again is writing close to the self. It is a very clear instance of a child convincing herself of the similarity of what she can see to that which she can't see. The last sentence illustrates clearly the ambiguous nature of expressive language, and the dependence of expressive language upon a knowledge of the situation for its meaning to become clear. It was not Dianne's heart that the class looked at. It was a chicken heart that Dianne had brought to class.

There is a great deal in this piece that many teachers would find difficult to accept. I would like to suggest again that if we can look past the faulty writing to the function of the endeavour, then it can be seen that the learner is clarifying and confirming ideas which are new to her. She is, in fact, doing her own learning.

It seems to me that Barbara is very confident about presenting her ideas. There is no sign of doubt, tentativeness or hesitancy. It seems that Barbara knows that what she has to say is worth saying - for its own sake and hers. Whether or not the teacher will "approve" doesn't seem to be a matter for concern, and of course, in her class it wasn't at that time.

Here is another example of expressive writing in which Anna, a girl in grade five, is making some discoveries for herself. Anna is the kind of child we call a "walking disaster." She came to school with a very negative report card, and an extremely low opinion of herself and her capabilities. She rarely spoke and wrote very little for almost two years. In response to some talk about crowds and loneliness she wrote this:

> "Its a Crowded World" -
> Have you been in a croud? I have i hate to be in a croud. Wall one day I sent to a store but I had to take a bus down thear. Ther was a big croud on the bus so I sat down by a fat old lady. She was so fat I could not believe it. She just sat and stared and stared at me. Then finally she stopped suddently, I nearly fell out of me seat. Then she started to pick her teeth. I felt awful because I could smell her bad breath it was so awful.
>
> Anna C. Grade 5

In the first place, the piece has its own direct charm; it is strong, clear and deeply felt. But is there more to it than that? Clearly we must guess, but it seems likely that Anna, among other things, is coming to terms with bad smells generated by the human body. Much of her own isolation in the class had been occasioned by her own bodily smell and she knew it. The other kids told her she smelled and the nurse had been talking to her about personal hygiene. It seems that the atmosphere in which Anna had lived for two years was beginning to have its effect. The acceptance of what she had to say helped Anna to recognize elements in her world which she found difficult to cope with. Had Anna been made to feel selfconscious about her ability to write "standard English", she might never have made that little

artistic construct in which she represents a situation rather than tells about it. This is a clear example of Expressive-Poetic writing.

THE OVERT PERSUADERS

Britton's third point, that expressive language is the principal means by which we influence one another as we declare our identities and as we work our way into new insights, might be illustrated by this extract from a small group discussion that was taped while children tried to grapple with the difficult ideas put forward by Zeno in his paradoxes. Previous to this, the children in grade six had done a great deal of work in art in trying to represent things moving. They had also seen many pictures by famous artists, like Degas and Picasso, who had wrestled with the problem of representing movement in a static medium. Subjects for their art work were bicycle wheels, an electric fan, falling pages of a book, a pencil falling from the vertical to the horizontal, a clockwork ballerina, a "slinky" coil, an oscillating filament lamp, a toy car racing across the desk, and water cascading from a drinking fountain.

Zeno's paradoxes were transcribed into simpler language, and the children read the episodes into a tape-recorder. After working through a period of total bewilderment, and without the teacher present, Glen and Bill begin to make some sense of the paradoxes with the help of the others, and come to what for them would seem to be a rational and satisfactory conclusion.

(Extract from tape)

Debbie: He was talking about, talking about you can't move.

Glen: Well if it had to move half of the half of the half that is half anyways (laughter ---) it couldn't move like you said (indistinct group talk). I'm going to change my mind about the argument. It had, it had to move though.

All: Yea.

Glen: It had to because, um, if you went out of that door, if you went out of that door ...

Bill: He's a weird guy. (laughter from everyone)

Glen: No, but it had, but it, the pencil had to fall over if he pushed it. Yea.

Bill: Who said he pushed it though?

John: (Squeaking to attract attention and to try and make a space for himself in the conversation.) (Much excited group talk.)

Bill: John has something to say.

John: It can't stand up, it has to fall.

Bill: Yea, well, Mr. Goodhall, he took the thing and, and he said that it was a five (indistinct) and when he showed us some pictures it was just up on the nick of the, of the desk, so it had to move.

All: Yea, but if (everyone fights for talk space.)

John: But if you stood a pencil up, if you stood a pencil up and then you knocked it over, it would fall it wouldn't just stand there.

Debbie: Yea, but when I had my book ...

John: Yea, but, yea, but look, this guy said if it had to move half way down to the desk and still half of that and half of that and half and half and half and that half, um, it would never move.

Glen: Yea you see, if it was right here, it would have to fall over with such a little way to go, and that's hardly anything, it, nothing in fact, um ...

Debbie: It would fall backwards, maybe.

All: (Laughter from all.)

John: It's right here. Th: law of gravity was passed.

All: Yea.

John: Well, maybe if it comes up forward like that.

Debbie: No, when I, when I flipped my pages, it, they fell and everything ...

John: Well I know they fall.

Glen: Yea, but I still want to change my mind about the argument.

Bill: When he changed his, when he, his arm came out of its socket, you said the Doctor said he would be alright and everything.

Debbie: No but it was out of its socket, and he was probably ...

Glen: Yea! But he was talking that it couldn't move and if it was out of its socket - it moved.

John: Well how does he know that its out of its socket anyway. If his theory was true it wouldn't be out of its socket.

All: Right.

Glen: Oh! he wouldn't have been able to talk anyway if his theory was true. If he doesn't move his vocal cords and his jaw and something on the (indistinct - but more laughter) and, um, so if his theory was true, which he said it was, he wouldn't have been able to tell them about it, he wouldn't have been able to think about it because the nerves in his brain wouldn't move, if his theory was true there wouldn't be anything ...

All: (General agreement and laughter out of which comes)

Bill: I know.

Glen: It wouldn't be, nothing would move, everything would just stand there, there couldn't be anything.

Bill: Yea!!

Glen: Because, there would have to be movement to create the thought.

Bill: Yea, like, if they weren't there they'd just stand still and nothing would ever happen.

In speaking in the small supportive group, the children individually disclose in expressive talk their way of looking at things, their experience, their context and their world view; in short, each declares his identity. And so, in the discussion, Glen brings his own experience to bear, "It couldn't move, like you said." Bill believes that philosophers are "weird guys"; not an uncommonly held opinion, and John puts up for general consideration the idea that, "If you stand pencils up and then knock them down, they just don't stand there." Then Debbie hints that it was much the same with the pages in her book, they fell as they were flipped.

In the process of pursuing the discussion, in using expressive talk, the children move to new insights. Thus, Glen, at the very beginning of the extract, wants to change his mind about the pencil not falling over if it is pushed. John supports Glen in his belief. Bill confirms John's point by introducing evidence from a color slide of a falling pencil. To get out of a dead end, Debbie suggests that maybe the pencil fell backwards, an apparently irrelevant remark, but she is not censured. The group accepts her remarks and goes on. John drops in "the law of gravity" from nowhere. Debbie reminds John that things only fall down, not up. This process, involving expressive talk leads Glen to his final conclusion, that if there wasn't movement, thought couldn't take place and Zeno couldn't have told his stories. He has worked his way into new insights.

In sum, the discussion illustrates Britton's third point, that expressive language is the principal means by which we influence one another. It is clear that the children prod each other on to new insights by their acceptance of any suggestion, no matter how poorly formulated or how outlandish it seems to be. Half made utterances are accepted, seemingly irrelevant suggestions are admitted, half formed ideas are picked up. A complex pattern of influence, deriving from all and affecting each, emerges from the flow of expressive talk.

GROWTH

What is the outcome when teachers and children work in an atmosphere of acceptance of the expressive? The following examples illustrate the writing development of one child, Angela, in such an atmosphere over four years of school. While a sample of one person's writing is in no way conclusive, it is, nevertheless, typical of the majority of the class, typical also of the majority of students of her age in the school. The examples were not selected as evidence of her best work; rather they were chosen as typical of her work in each grade.

Grade 2

My Indian

I made an Indian out of a can.
I yozzed really feathers.
I yozzed a ball for the nose.
I yozzed diamonds for the eyes.
I put a mouth on him and he
looks funny.

Grade 3

Things I liked best at Bragg Creek.

On Tuesday June 12 we went to Bragg Creek.
What I liked best was the buss ride. On the way we saw a Magpie, a Coyote, the stone crop. When I was getting a drink at the creek Randy B. threw a rock in the water and it splashed me and I got went. Station 4 was Oierenteering we had to find signs by following a stream. We ate hotdogs, pop, marshmellows, cookies, guess how muck all the food costed for 57 people costed, it costed $30.39c. While we were looking around we found red ants. I had a bag that had lots of stuff in and I used it for a knapp sack. I had lots of fun. We sang sons like puff the Magic Dragon and other songs. The adults names were. Mrs. Schnidt, Mrs.Tocheniuk, Mrs.hendericks Mrs. Hoeft, Miss Johnson.

Grade 4

Western Canada Steel Mill

When we went to the Western Canada Steelmill we saw how they melt the scrap metal in a big furnace, but first they compress it. When they put it in the furnace they have to remove the lid. On the top there is some rods called electrodes, this heats the metal. When it is done it's poured into a thing called a ladel. The ladel then moves over some molds, and is taken outside to cool.

When the steel cools it is called ingots. The ingots are put into a reheating furnace and then slide out of the furnace and through a series of rollers which squeeze the steel into a very thin piece of steel.

It then goes down a thing like a walkway and threw a machine that cools it; it goes down another walkway and is cut. When it's cool it's used for reinforcing rods.

Grade 5

Crevasses

Crevasses are large cracks that form within a glacier when the ice moves. They are often very deep with vertical walls. Sometimes the snow melts on top of a glacier and the water runs into the crevasses. When walking along a glacier often you hear the sound of rushing water reverbrating off the sides of the crevasses.

Angela still has some distance to go. However, in grade 5, she is writing readily and easily, with commitment, confidence, insight, clarity and increasing correctness, showing she is able to move into transactional writing with youthful authority. Nurtured in the expressive, she shows strong evidence of having grown in language competence and gives promise of continuing growth. All these examples come from direct school experiences of doing things and going places - even to climbing on glaciers!! There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that personal writing helps young people to believe in and to understand the impersonal mode of their subject texts.

THE NEED TO ACCEPT THE EXPRESSIVE

In his article, "Teacher Image in Literature and the Mass Media", McConaghy makes this observation:

> The image of the teacher is part of a person performing work of value to society, but rather impersonal, in many ways like that of the civil servant .... the impression is created of the teacher not being as effective as one would expect. 9

Education comes under daily attack in North America from many sectors of the society. Critical articles appear in the press, and radio and television have their corrosive commentators. A great deal of the criticism centers around basic literacy, the ability or the inability of students to read, speak and to express themselves clearly and unequivocally in writing. The following article is typical of the continuing tirade:

> The whole education debate seems destined to continue for a long time to come, as more and more illiterates are churned out by the school system. The evidence that something is wrong is easily detected by parents who see the victims of the education system everyday, and by kids themselves who often find they reach University and the world beyond without being able to read and write adequately. Universities are filled with the half-educated - and not only among the instructors. 10

We would like to make the suggestion that it is the prematurely deliberate, impersonal stance that education takes which contributes largely to school failure. In the light of this stance, it is no

wonder that many children, especially those in the less favoured districts, find their work in the schools to be mysterious, cryptic, frustrating, threatening and defeating; and that they themselves become hostile, angry, disillusioned, hopeless, rebellious, indifferent, truculent, disobedient, sly, dishonest, idle, feckless, slow, impudent and impossible.

It seems likely that because of the denial of expressive language in schools, tensions between staff and students are engendered, and much real learning is blocked. Several recent studies show that expressive language finds little place in the daily work of the schools.

Searle in a study to explore the nature of the classroom talk in the secondary school found that:

> The majority of classroom talk proceeded from experience of activity generated in the classroom and tended to be in transactional mode rather than the expressive or poetic. Student writing was used primarily as a means of recording and reporting experience. Little opportunity was given in class for assimilating new experiences into an existing understanding or for altering points of view to accommodate new experience. [11]

Parbs, in a longitudinal study of the writing of three girls over a period of six years (Grades 7-12) consisting of 179 pieces of work, found that:

> ...transactional writing was generally emphasized throughout the high school and that by grade 12 the writing was almost exclusively transactional. [12]

In her implications for research, Parbs notes that:

> The role of the expressive talk and expressive writing in poetic and transactional writing needs full exploration. Its significance was mainly a subject of speculation in this study because of the paucity of such language in the samples. 13

Newton's study, which explores the means by which the language of teachers may influence the learning of their pupils, found that:

> The teachers' habitual closed questions, heavy emphasis on their view of the subject, insistence on transactional language, and structuring devices, often resulted in rote responses, pseudo-participation and an impersonal study of subject matter on the part of pupils. 14

The language of two student teachers was studied and it was found that:

> Both teachers tended towards a heavy use of transactional language. The pupils in both classes also used a great deal of transactional language, but less than their teachers... Very little actual expressive language was used by either teachers or pupils, but more expressive language was used by pupils than by teachers.
>
> Since the material analyzed in the Newton Study was gathered in the writer's school, where there is a clear understanding of the function and acceptance of expressive language in learning and the lives of children, it is heartening to note the comment:
>
> > This low incidence of expressive language used by both pupils and teachers was a contrast to the usual language situation in that class. In the one complete lesson taped and categorized with the regular teacher, she used expressive language 44.6 percent of the time; the children 53.8 percent of the time. Teacher A's highest use of expressive language was 28.9 percent and her class's highest use 25.1 percent. Teacher B's highest use was 28.3 percent and her class's highest use was 39.8 percent.
> > (Ibid)

The report of a five-year longitudinal study of the writing of

secondary level students, conducted in England, further confirms the preponderant emphasis that is given to transactional writing in schools. Considered over six years of school, and taking into account the writing in all subjects, 63 percent of all the work was transactional. When we add to this amount the writing categorized as "pseudo" and "dummy run" (9 percent in total) work that is essentially transactional in intent, the degree of emphasis on this language function becomes even more apparent. The subject which deviated most from this pattern was English, where only 34 percent of the writing was transactional. In all subjects, in the sixth form, emphasis on transactional writing had increased to 84 percent. (Britton, 1974) [16]

If expressive language is denied in school, trust between children and teachers is not likely to be established, because teachers will rarely be able to show themselves as anything other than educational functionaries. In elementary schools this impersonal stance takes the form of work-book questions with non-debatable answers, responses to questions on tape, self-correcting computer-designed reading programs and criterion-based referenced testing, to diagnose and evaluate skills development. And the latter, in their turn, accentuate the impersonal stance. Further, what is commonly put forward as individualized instruction can also be a lonely and impersonal business. It is too easy for a teacher to consign a child to a language learning kit and leave him to mark his own work, record his own results and never really get to know what a child has been thinking and learning.

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In the end there is little in it for the learner. All that is engaged in is to the teacher's ends: learning correct usage, correct spelling and correct grammer. Again, this is not to say that these latter tasks are not crucial concerns of the teacher; in the end they must be. But learning skills for their own sake must be replaced by writing that interests, intrigues, excites, engages and gives a feeling of success and satisfaction to the learner because the act of writing in large measure serves his purpose.

A SCHOOL FOR LEARNING

If children are to learn language by using language, then there must be plenty of interesting things to use language about. A school that makes language learning its central concern will be a lively, enquiring, making, doing, out-and-about school. There will be many shared experiences which in the end will need shaping, in talk, in paint, in models, in drama and finally in writing, but writing close to the self. The creative-personal use of language will try to probe feelings and attitudes towards the topics under discussion, and it is this lively personal aspect of school work that expressive language fosters.

However, learning from experience, of itself, is not enough. Neither is learning from media and instruction, of itself, enough. Children can learn and make discoveries by talking and writing as surely as they can by reading and being told. The current concern in schools

for teaching "skills" as if they were an end in themselves, and drilling children in facts to be known as ends in themselves reflects a naive psychology, and a less than contemporary view of language development. Bruner reports a statement by Fritz Heider to this effect:

> The general assumption of such a naive psychology is that the effects of experience can be considered as knowledge, that knowledge is conscious, and that knowledge can be translated into words. Symmetrically, words can be translated into knowledge; hence, one can learn - that is, one can acquire knowledge from being told. (Brunner & Olson, 1974, p. 125) [17]

Real learning takes place when skills and knowledge are brought together in performances because real learning is personal learning. Lancelot Hogben, Hendrik Willem Van Loon and Paul De Kruif knew this. They told the story of science and history and biological research in a very easy-going, intimate and personal way. Jacob Bronowski, writing for much more mature auidences, used a very personal mode of address:

> Science is not an impersonal construction. It is no less, and no more personal than other forms of communicated thought. This book is no less scientific because my manner is personal, and I make no apology for it. Science searches the common experience of people; and it is made by people, and it has their style.
> (Bronowski, 1960, p. 19) [18]

There can be no doubt that Bronowski was aware of the power of impersonal language, its ability to order and to systematize, to make abstractions and to hold disparate notions together and so

develop more general levels of thinking. But he chose to write in a very personal style, because, as he said, he was writing about people and experience, and the personal mode was appropriate.

The educational establishment is altogether too impatient with children and their formal education. The imperative is "to teach" when it should really be "to learn", but that shifts the emphasis of activity in classrooms and many teachers don't feel comfortable when they are not "teaching." They experience a real feeling of loss of control.

There is a need to restate and re-examine the teacher's role in the classroom in the light of the new insights which linguists and educational theorists have been putting forward. Instead of children being told things which they are supposed to remember, they should use language in the classroom to inform, to persuade, to make relationships, to discover things, to classify, to invent, to find out, to pin down experience for consideration, to reflect upon things not now taking place. This whole spectrum of language function can be used by children to "Reconcile their inner lives with external reality." 19

This reconciliation of "the way it is" with "the way I would like it to be" is in a very real sense what schools should be about. In this kind of situation the teacher becomes the one "who sets the

scene" for new and diverse work. As the children's work proceeds, it is the teacher's job to confirm the rightness of the on-going work, to support and develop mutual trust within the "workshop." The working groups may need to be called together from time to time to refocus their attention and aims with respect to the job in hand. A teacher may try to develop a sense of audience beyond himself, and bring together the work in such a way that it can be presented to other groups within the school, and of course, to the children themselves who did the work.

When children are busy putting their world together, classrooms become more like workshops and school is "for real." Classrooms are not always tidy, work isn't always finished, although this doesn't happen often. What can be threatening is that teachers are not always in control of what is being learned, and so find evaluation of progress in the usual ways to be difficult. Teachers must work as generalists, but they will be specialists in children's learning, knowing a great deal about the function of language in learning, about language and thought - and especially about expressive language. It is in expressive language that personal relationships are built, identities declared and a real base generated for personal learning.

DIFFICULTIES IN ACCEPTING THE EXPRESSIVE

One of the real difficulties in talking about expressive language to many teachers is that they do not see it as a serious functional

and educationally productive idea. Because it is language close to the self, it is often thought to be substandard and not fit to be considered seriously in the earnest business of education. It is too enjoyable, too unorthodox and too easy for school. Expressive speech might be accepted in certain circumstances, but expressive writing is another matter altogether. In school, writing must be correct and that means a variety of formal elements, including the passive voice, the impersonal mode.

The point here is not that teachers should abdicate their responsibilities to elicit "the best" to encourage children to become accurate, proficient and easily competent in a wide range of linguistic abilities, rather, the point is that the teacher needs to be aware of how language competence grows, that he or she should see it in a developmental context. Two prime elements in that context are the significance of the child's own language and the centrality of expressive language to the development of more sophisticated language growth. The long range aim will always be to foster development of more explicit language on the one hand and more artistically shaped and carefully presented utterance on the other. In an article in the Times Educational Supplement Nancy Martin asks:

> But why won't expressive writing do for the serious business of education? Is there something more than a puritan ethic involved? Is the uneasiness that teachers feel about it derived from social attitudes towards dialects - or teacherly attitudes towards the virtue of what is difficult? Educators don't take the expressive seriously. They do not value it as a writing mode in itself or as one that can make a serious contribution to writing in other modes; i.e., the transactional

or the poetic. They do not see it as the language of tentative exploration of new knowledge and new ideas. Nor do they see it as the language mode which generates situations of trust and reciprocity between people. 20

We need to transcend this limited, teacherly view of ordinary language; and educators can, if they try to understand expressive language and its functions.

When teachers put at the heart of their teaching something so apparently simple and common place as expressive language, they need not feel a sense of loss with respect to their traditionally defined function. The children's openness, delight, humor, insight, inventiveness and sheer competence will be compensation enough for the felt loss of former functions. The shift from instructing to helping, catching the enthusiasm of the moment, will no longer be a concern. In letting children go, in encouraging them to make sense of their world, the aim of the elementary schools could easily become this, "to educate in the human dimension."

WE TRIED IT

The ideas set out in this pamphlet have been worked with in Patrick Airlie School, Calgary, for the past five years. The quality of the children's work has slowly increased over the years and the instances of hostility, anger and defeat amongst the children

have decreased. The visiting teacher's casebook is almost empty, there is no truancy problem and vandalism, in and out of the school is almost zero.

We truly believe that all this is due to a willingness on the part of the staff of the school to accept and to understand a school-wide language policy, at the heart of which is a further willingness to accept as a starting point the world representation and the language a child brings with him to school. This is not always easy, but it has brought us a fine measure of success.

The teachers in the five year project were:

Mr. Garry Aguss
Mr. Herb Arnold (Assistant Principal)
Miss Fay Bennett
Mrs. Sue Bergstrom
Mr. Brian Chisan (Child Psychologist)
Ms. Diane DeBoice
Mrs. Caroline Dokken
Miss Margaret Ferguson (Librarian)
Mrs. Barbe Flath
Mr. Phil Goodhall (Principal Teacher)
Mrs. Cathy Harder
Mrs. Margy Harrington
Mrs. Anne Hendricks
Mrs. Jean Hoeft
Ms. Linda Johnson
Mrs. Shirley Kelly
Mrs. Judy LaPierie
Miss Linda La Rose
Mrs. Maureen McDonald
Mrs. Beverly Newell
Mrs. Sue Phillips (Librarian)
Mrs. Sylvia Reine (Librarian)
Mrs. Margery Rogers (Specialist Reading Teacher)
Ms. Laurie Wade
Miss Angela Walter

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